

SAO: Broken

by Jason22274

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Summary: Sequel to Death Wish. Asuna was finally free to find Kirito, or was she? Author's note: Currently I'm in the process of moving out of state, so this is going to be written extremely slowly until I am settled again.

SAO: Broken

"Good morning, Titania."

The first words heard outside of SAO's imprisonment was from a man she had hated almost from the moment she met him. Definitely within five minutes of talking to him all those years ago.

She would recognize that voice anywhere. He hadn't even tried to change it, even if the form was different. Dealing with Kayaba had taught her to never trust what she saw.

Jumping into a fighter's crouch, she looked over her surroundings while still watching this man. As she had known the moment she touched her ears this was another virtual world. A giant tree and a bird cage? A well appointed bird cage, but a cage none the less. The symbolism wasn't lost on her.

"He's waiting for you among the trees," Kayaba had told her before she had woken up here. This tree? Had he known where she would wind up, or was this a sick coincidence?

Sugo shook his head. "Titania, my love," he started. "You don..." he finished, as Asuna sprang forward, driving her knee into his gut and delivering an elbow to the back of his skull in a single fluid motion.

He was no Heathcliff. He didn't have the reactions of a fighter. A fighter confident of his immortality wouldn't have reacted at all. A

fighter who knew he was mortal would have been able to put up at least a slight defense.

He flinched, but otherwise took the hits without moving. He was immortal however, and unlike Heathcliff he didn't get pushed by the impacts. After a second to realize what had just happened, he laughed. He had obviously expected her as she had been before entering the game. The laugh was more nervous than humorous.

"That is foolish My Queen," he said, then snapped his fingers. Instantly she found herself lifted into the air and held firm by an invisible force. It wasn't the same as the paralysis she had endured too many times in SAO. There she had no control over her body. Here she felt more like she was held by invisible hands. She could fight, and always felt a slight give when she did, but it was futile.

"Titania, you've changed. Did life in that barbaric game affect you so badly?"

Yes, the death game had effected her that badly. Worse in fact. Her attack had been limited because of her lack of weapons, otherwise it would have a stab through the heart, not a knee to his stomach he would have not felt.

"Why do you keep calling me by that name?" she asked coldly, refusing to fight the invisible bonds. It was system controlled, and the system always won.

"Because you are Oberon's queen. And I, of course, am Oberon."

She couldn't help but snort at his stupidity. "Your queen, huh?"

Walking up, he ignored her glare. "Oh, you are definitely my queen, in both this world and the real one."

It was obvious he was trying to bait her, but she wouldn't give him that satisfaction. The real world didn't matter until she could reach it. Then she would decide if she wished to remain there, or to move on to the world beyond that one. Kayaba's last sentence, for the first time in two years, made her doubt that resolve.

In either case whatever he thought he had on her didn't matter.

"Oh, that face! So angry. I have looked forward to seeing those angry eyes of yours again, and they are more fierce than ever." Sadly, she could tell it really was exciting him.

Pathetic.

Something in her look must have registered. He backhanded her in sudden anger. "You think you can look down on me?" he yelled. "I own you."

There was no point in replying. Her very silence would tell him what she thought of that assessment.

The slap had stung. That meant she wasn't immortal. What would happen if she died in this world? She didn't think the Japanese government

would allow for another VRMMO to be released that had the same ability to hold anyone in the game hostage. So that meant a respawn was likely.

Unless, of course, this wasn't a MMO, but a small server just for the two of them. That was possible, but she doubted it. This felt to well done for something that simple. The environment outside the cage, for one, could have been done without.

What were her stats? Did she still have the high agility granted by SAO? It had felt like it during her brief moment of freedom.

A few seconds after his outburst Sugo regained his composure, smiling smugly. "Give it time Titania. You'll accept your pace soon enough," he said, as he turned and left.

For all the control he seemed to have, the door used an antiquated numerical keypad. She couldn't see what he had typed however, which again proved he had administrative level control over this world. Still, why have a code at all? So others could access the cage? It was the only explanation she could think of.

Once he was gone whatever had a hold of her let go, leaving her free to move again. At least as much as the room in the cage permitted.

She looked over what was available. A gaudy, oversized bed was the prominent piece of furniture. Sugo had always lusted after her, even when she was a young child. It didn't take much to guess why that was there.

A desk and a set of table and chairs finished off the meager furniture. The chairs all looked purposely uncomfortable, leaving the bed the only comfortable option.

He really was pathetic.

Looking outside the cage she saw that many of the branches had trails grooved into the top, forming a network of paths for people to walk. The tree's trunk was huge. The Town of Beginnings probably could have fit within, but most impressive was the castle on top. It wasn't the size of Aincrad, but she'd never seen a world that could support a castle large enough to be an entire MMO by itself.

She guessed it was about twenty stories from her perspective, and just as wide as the trunk that supported it.

Looking downwards she saw a city. It was more distant than the castle above her, so catching details was difficult, but using the trunk as reference it was probably as large as the ninety-eighth floor of Aincrad, maybe a bit larger.

Judging by the rising smoke the city was in ruins, large giants, big enough to be seen despite the distance, was walking among the shattered buildings. Some were swatting at something around them, apparently in combat.

Taking a moment to sit at the table she decided to check some of her earlier questions. With a swipe of her right hand to bring up the menu, and nothing happened. It was possible that gaming convention

was different. She tried again with her left hand and got the result she expected with the other.

Checking her stats she noted that all of them appeared normal, the level of her previous avatar listed next to each. Her duel wield ability was missing. It was a unique skill, so perhaps that was simply not translatable? That was as good of a guess as any.

With that thought she checked her inventory next, and found that all of it showed errors where the items should have been. Panicked, she scrolled through the copious error entries to see if it was still there.

As a married couple all of Kirito's items not equipped to him had been transferred to her when he had died. That had included Yui's Heart. It was her last real connection to her husband, and her most treasured item. Only at the end, when she had lost herself to everything but the need to die, did she not clutch it at night.

With a sense of relief she found it. She needed that relief again to bring calm to her heart. Clicking on it to bring out the pendent, she was shocked when what formed wasn't the pendent, but was instead her dead daughter.

She wasn't dead any longer.

For the second time since killing Heathcliff Asuna cried. This time tears of forgotten joy.

"Mommy!"

End
file.